Beyond Emboldenment
The Effects of Nuclear Weapons on State Foreign Policy

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December 11, 2014
between a simple detonation and a weapons capability and between having a small weapons capability and being a major nuclear power. Also the Chinese might well use a prototype MRBM, with one or more additional stages, to place a satellite into orbit. This could be accomplished some time before an MRBM was operable and well before such a system was nuclear armed. The purpose, of course, would be to give the impression of much greater strength than had actually been acquired and to persuade the people of neighboring countries that Peiping was riding the wave of the future which it was futile to resist. At the same time Peiping would work to persuade audiences in other underdeveloped countries that Chinese-style communism provides the most effective and rapid way to become a modern industrial, scientific, and military power.

24. A Chinese Communist nuclear detonation would increase the momentum of Peiping’s drive for great-power status and acceptance in international councils. Peiping would argue that it is less dangerous to have a nation with nuclear arms in the UN and other international bodies than to keep it isolated, and would be in a position to claim persuasively that substantial progress toward world peace and disarmament was seriously hampered unless it participated in negotiations. Peiping has already gone on record as not being bound by any agreements made without its participation. It would demand international recognition, UN membership, or other prerequisites as the price of its participation. In any event, Communist China would reject a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty.

25. We do not believe that the explosion of a first device, or even the acquisition of a limited nuclear weapons capability, would produce major changes in Communist China’s foreign policy in the sense that the Chinese would adopt a general policy of open military aggression, or even become willing to take significantly greater military risks. China’s leaders would recognize that their limited capabilities had not altered the real power balance among the major states and could not do so in the foreseeable future. In particular, they would recognize that they remained unable either to remove or neutralize the US presence in Asia.

26. Nevertheless, the Chinese would feel very much stronger and this mood would doubtless be reflected in their approach to conflicts on their periphery. They would probably feel that the US would be more reluctant to intervene on the Asian mainland and thus the tone of Chinese policy would probably become more assertive.* Further, their

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2. Typology

3. Britain

4. Conclusions
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Research Question

What effects do nuclear weapons have on the foreign policies of the states that acquire them?

Despite its importance, not satisfactorily addressed in previous work, which:

• Focuses on outcomes other than foreign policy, such as interstate conflict
• Focuses on the effect of nuclear weapons on the calculations of other states
• Conflates distinct effects of nuclear weapons under catch all terms such as "emboldenment"
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What is foreign policy?

Foreign policy:

- The portion of grand strategy that deals with a state's relationships with other states
- A collection of means and ends with which a state pursues its goals with respect to a given other state
- Dyadic: state A may have a different foreign policy towards state B to that which it has towards state C

So we need a typology of dyadic foreign policy behaviors that nuclear weapons may facilitate

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Aggression

Increased belligerence in pursuit of pre-existing interests

- Nuclear weapons may reduce the cost of aggression by adding a layer of military capability that can be called upon (or that might be used inadvertently); raise the risk of escalation for opponents.
- Only if nuclear weapons are not used as a substitute for conventional forces.
- Particularly attractive to states facing severe threats.
- Example: Pakistan.
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- Example: Pakistan
Expansion

The widening of a state's goals in international politics

- Composed of two dyadic behaviors: formation of new alliances and initiation of new adversarial relationships
- Nuclear weapons may reduce the cost of expansion by allowing states to free up conventional forces, which can be redeployed in pursuit of new interests
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Independence

Taking actions that an ally opposes or does not support

• By providing an internal source of security, nuclear weapons act as a partial substitute for an external source of security, and thus reduce the cost of acting contrary to the wishes of an ally

• Particularly attractive to states with senior allies who provide for their security

• Example: France
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- Example: France
Bolstering

Taking actions to increase the strength of an alliance or ally

• Nuclear weapons may reduce the price of bolstering by providing technologies that can be transferred, or by offering a lower cost way to defend an alliance partner

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• Example: China
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- Example: China
Steadfastness

- A reduced inclination to back down; increased willingness to fight to defend status quo
- Nuclear weapons may reduce the cost of steadfastness by raising the risk of escalation against a state, reducing the danger for the nuclear state of refusing to back down in a crisis
- Likely to be attractive to all states
- Example: Pakistan
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- Example: Pakistan
Compromise

Accepting less in pursuit of pre-existing interests

- Nuclear weapons may reduce the cost of compromise by reducing the value of holding territory and strategic depth, and reducing the security risks associated with making compromises to a potential adversary.

- Unclear whether states have acted in this way, though scholars have often argued that they should.

- Example: Israel.
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- Example: Israel?
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4. Conclusions
Aims

- Can we identify and distinguish between the behaviors?
- Britain a "hard" case because we would expect limited effect of nuclear weapons
  - Britain a conventionally powerful, status quo state with a nuclear-armed ally and geographic buffers between it and its primary rival
- Look at the point at which Britain acquired a deliverable capability (1955) and look for changes in behavior
- Look at speech evidence and contemporary writings to see if nuclear acquisition caused the change

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Nuclear weapons a tool for maintenance, not expanding the British position or taking more in existing disputes

- Britain sees nuclear weapons as a substitute for conventional forces
- Eden, 1956: Britain must “continue the trend towards greater reliance on nuclear weapons”
- British conventional forces take more limited role: manpower constant at 850,000 from 1952-1954; down to 700,000 in 1957 and 500,000 by 1960. Macmillan: deep cuts “must depend on the acceptance of nuclear weapons”
- Secret internal history: “The nuclear dimension of defence...was seen as providing the opportunity for economies in defence...without any sacrifices in national security.” As a result, “little change in the objectives of British defence commitments”
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### Bolstering

At a time when the government was putting more emphasis on nuclear deterrence, a range of alliance commitments were entered into:

- **SEATO** - established in 1955, Britain immediately “moved toward a more overt acceptance of nuclear planning assumptions that would reassure allies without producing a greater call on their resources.”

- **Baghdad Pact** pursued in 1955; “nuclear strike was seen as the main component of the assistance which could be offered.”

Britain argued nuclear weapons allowed it to place less emphasis on conventional forces in NATO.

“No overseas commitments had been dropped but reductions in the level of military support were in prospect and the RAF was seen as having a major part to play in offsetting their effect.”

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Steadfastness Independence & Compromise, pre-1955

• Iran, 1951: Britain considers military response to nationalization of Anglo-Iranian oil but decides not to act because of US opposition

  Attlee: “in view of the attitude of the US...it would not be expedient to use force”

• Buraimi, 1952-54: Britain seeks US support over Saudi occupation of Buraimi

  Britain unable to use force “while they required American support in Egypt and Iran”

• Egypt: Britain seeks US support in negotiations over Suez base, ultimately agrees to withdraw

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• Buraimi, 1955: Britain retakes Buraimi, does not inform US
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• Suez, 1956: Britain undertakes intervention despite US opposition
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• Oman, 1957; Jordan 1958: Britain intervenes despite lack of US support

Did nuclear weapons cause the change? Desire for independence a core driver of British nuclear acquisition.

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• British foreign policy significantly changed with the acquisition of a deliverable capability
• Britain displays some but not all of the behaviors - demonstrating the utility of the typology
• Moving beyond "emboldenment" is helpful - we can identify more fine-grained responses to nuclear acquisition
• Nuclear weapons are not simply "weapons of the weak"
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Thank you!

Working paper available at:
http://ssrn.com/abstract=2453155

markbell@mit.edu
Spare slides
Theory

Serious threats on border?

Yes → Aggression & Steadfastness towards threat

No → Senior Ally?

Yes → Independence from senior ally

No → Rising in power?

Yes → Expansion & bolstering of junior allies

No → Bolstering of junior allies & steadfastness towards rivals
Theory applied to Britain

- **Serious threats on border?**
  - Yes: **Aggression & Steadfastness towards threat**
  - No:
    - **Senior Ally?**
      - Yes: **Independence from senior ally**
      - No:
        - **Rising in power?**
          - Yes: **Expansion & bolstering of junior allies**
          - No: **Bolstering of junior allies & steadfastness towards rivals**